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NGA Review

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Directorate of  
Intelligence

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# Afghanistan Situation Report



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**26 November 1985**

**79-81 INC/CB**

**Top Secret**

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*SOVA M 85-10203CX*

*26 November 1985*

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**TOP SECRET**

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**AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT****CONTENTS****SOVIET ACTIVE IN QANDAHAR**

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1 25X1

operations are in progress in the Qandahar area in apparent retaliation for the 12 November death of a Soviet Air Force General and to improve the extremely poor security situation in Qandahar City.

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**POOR INSURGENT SECURITY PRACTICES**

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The insurgents tend to be careless about maintaining security practices: they discuss operational plans in public places or over the radio, travel the same supply routes repeatedly, and stop in the same teahouses.

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**AFGHAN RESISTANCE REQUEST FOR SEAT IN THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE BLOCKED**

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The Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference told the Afghan resistance delegation to the UN that it could not be seated at the OIC

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**FOREIGN COMMUNITY UNDER PRESSURE IN KABUL**

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The Kabul regime has harassed members of the diplomatic community in an apparent attempt to eliminate Western influence and intimidate those diplomats whose countries support the resistance.

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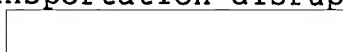
**FOOD PRICES STABLE IN KABUL**



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The Soviets keep Kabul adequately supplied with food and food prices in the city did not increase this year. Elsewhere, food prices have risen because war-related transportation disruptions cause spot shortages.



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**IN BRIEF**

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**PERSPECTIVE**

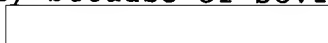
**AFGHANISTAN-USSR: INSURGENT ATTACKS INTO THE USSR**



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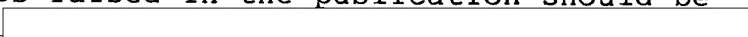
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Insurgent raids across the border into the USSR have had little military impact and will continue to occur infrequently because of Soviet border security measures.



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**SOVIETS ACTIVE IN QANDAHAR**

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These operations are probably in retaliation for the 12 November death of a Soviet Air Force General--who was killed after his MIG-21 was shot down by insurgent fire near Qandahar--and to improve the extremely poor security situation in Qandahar City. [redacted] in late October, insurgents controlled most of Qandahar City with the exception of the governor's residence and office, the airport, and the regime military base.

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**POOR INSURGENT SECURITY PRACTICES**

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[redacted] insurgent caravans this summer tended to stop at the same teahouses each time they traveled. Moreover, they used the same routes repeatedly and explicitly described their travel plans during their visits to teahouses. Maps for alternate routes were scarce, and few could read the maps that were available. [redacted]

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[redacted] guerrillas in radio contact with a familiar voice often discuss operational plans openly. [redacted]

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**Comment:** The insurgents' security awareness appears to lessen in proportion to their familiarity with a situation. The insurgents have been careful, however, when unknown persons are involved. Guerrillas, for example, screen Afghan Army defectors and others seeking to join their bands. Their weak security practices suggest that the Soviets are not aggressively targeting some major infiltration routes. [REDACTED]

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**AFGHAN RESISTANCE REQUEST FOR SEAT IN THE ISLAMIC  
CONFERENCE BLOCKED** [REDACTED]

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The Afghan resistance delegation to the UN General Assembly in November asked for Afghanistan's seat in the Islamic Conference (OIC). OIC Secretary-General Pirzada turned aside the insurgents [REDACTED]

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**Comment:** The OIC almost certainly would not agree unanimously to seat the insurgents. OIC members such as Libya, Syria, Iran, and South Yemen have never supported OIC resolutions on Afghanistan and would certainly block another move that they considered anti-Soviet. [REDACTED]

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**FOREIGN COMMUNITY UNDER PRESSURE IN KABUL** [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] During the past year, the Kabul regime has asked various diplomats to leave; has deported Indian, British, and American medical personnel; and has

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SOVA M 85-10203CX

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refused to renew contracts for educators and businessmen from France and West Germany. In October, a Saudi diplomat was assaulted by alleged government agents in his home. Saudi Arabia is closing its interests section as a result of the attack. [REDACTED]

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**Comment:** Kabul's harassment of Western diplomats is contrary to recent efforts to project a moderate, conciliatory image and broaden its popular support. Besides encouraging Westerners to leave, the badgering of the diplomatic community in Kabul may be aimed at intimidating missions that provide unflattering news on Afghanistan to their governments and the press, or are suspect because of their sympathies toward the resistance. [REDACTED]

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**FOOD PRICES STABLE IN KABUL** [REDACTED]

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During the past year, food prices in Kabul have shown little change, and supplies have been adequate, according to US Embassy reporting. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] food prices outside Kabul have risen, however. [REDACTED]

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**Comment:** The Soviets have kept Kabul adequately supplied with food despite the city's rapid population growth over the past few years. The Soviet Union probably believes that food shortages or price increases in Kabul would undermine efforts to build support for the Karmal regime. Despite food price increases in areas outside Kabul, weather data [REDACTED] suggest that supplies are generally adequate there as well. Food prices are usually higher outside the capital because war-related transportation disruptions cause occasional spot shortages. [REDACTED]

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**TOP SECRET****1985 Food Prices<sup>a</sup>**

	<u>Rice</u>	<u>Potatoes</u>	<u>Onions</u>	<u>Lamb</u>
<b>Kabul City</b>	30 (-6)	20 (67)	9 (-40)	180 (0)
<b>Ghazni Province</b>				
Qarah Bagh	105 (28)	32 (60)	35 (192)	180 (50)
Rawdza	80 (90)	19 (12)	40 (48)	210 (45)
Pyadarah	80 (33)	--	--	85 (21)
<b>Paktia Province</b>	74 (3)	45 (10)	--	345 (11)
<b>Panjsher Valley</b>	71 <sup>b</sup>	--	--	--

<sup>a</sup>All prices are in Afghanis/kg. The numbers in parentheses are the percent change from 1984. Negative numbers indicate price declines.

<sup>b</sup>We do not have information on 1984 prices in the Panjsher Valley.

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**IN BRIEF**

-- The Soviets are using new antipersonnel fragmentation mines in Afghanistan. Technical analysis shows that, unlike previous fragmentation mines, the new mine does not need to be manually emplaced and can be delivered in percussion-fired canisters that sow up to 240 mines at a time. The mine system will probably be mounted on aircraft or armored vehicles; it is not known if it can be defused easily. [REDACTED]

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-- The Soviet Union is building a road around the city of Mazar-e Sharif to improve security for convoys and military traffic [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Like the bypass the Soviets are building around the city of Qandahar, the road around Mazar-e Sharif is probably designed to avoid hilly and wooded terrain that affords insurgents cover from which to launch ambushes. [REDACTED]

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**TOP SECRET****PERSPECTIVE**

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**AFGHANISTAN-USSR: INSURGENT ATTACKS INTO THE USSR**

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We believe Afghan insurgent raids across the Soviet border have been few and have had a negligible military impact. They probably have heightened Moscow's concern about border security and the stability of its ethnic minority areas close to the border, however, and tied up some Soviet forces. The forays probably also help to sustain the insurgents' morale.

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**Insurgent Crossings**

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insurgents have probably exaggerated their successes when discussing the raids with Western journalists. We believe that most of the raids have occurred in the Tajik SSR, carried out by Jamiat-i-Islami insurgents; insurgent activities probably also extend into the Uzbek and Turkmen areas of the USSR.

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Insurgent crossings are most likely to occur in early spring and early fall, when river levels are low enough to ford or to be crossed easily on inflated goatskin rafts, Insurgent leaders recently told Western journalists that for three years they had been crossing the border into Tajikistan to mine roads and distribute Korans to their ethnic counterparts. In one instance in late 1984,

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a Soviet patrol encountered a band of young, non-Russian speakers in a valley in Tajikistan. The encounter was peaceful, but the patrol returned the next day, suspicious that none of the group spoke Russian. Local people told the patrol that the band was "dushman"--the Russian word for "bandit" that is an epithet for the Afghan insurgents--and that such groups regularly came to the valley and nearby areas "to rest." Moreover,

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elderly Tajiks sometimes slipped across the border to die in their home villages.

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Guerrillas also claim to have distributed propaganda in Soviet border areas and to have crossed into the USSR from Badakhshan and Konduz Provinces to mine Soviet roads. 



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Most insurgent raids, however, are probably no more than a continuation of a centuries-old tradition of livestock rustling along the border. 

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 Afghan Tajiks, assisted by their Soviet kinsmen, frequently attacked Soviet outposts north of Konduz Province to clear the way for stealing sheep from cooperative farms. 

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### Soviet Border Security

The USSR's sensitivity about its borders, coupled with its concern about the insurgency, has prompted strict security along much of the Soviet-Afghan border. KGB Border Guards maintain careful control over the populated areas of the border region and closely monitor civilians in the area 


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 Civilians in the zone are registered; travelers are checked for appropriate entry stamps and for legitimate reasons for entry; and residents are warned to report unusual activity or the appearance of strangers. 

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Security measures along the Soviet side of the border vary depending on the terrain.

--  heavy security precautions, including a combination of nearly impenetrable manmade barriers, alarm devices, and armed guards, protect about 60 percent of the border from Herat to Konduz Provinces--the portion that could most easily be crossed.

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-- Rugged terrain, sparse population, and lack of major transportation networks make crossings difficult in many areas where security is less intense.



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- The border area along the Pyandzh River (the upper Amu Darya), which is devoid of transportation routes or settlements and features extremely rugged terrain, particularly on the Soviet side, is characterized by only light Soviet security. It contains no border guard outposts but is probably patrolled periodically by air and monitored by remote surveillance or listening posts. [REDACTED]

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### **Outlook**

The military and logistic obstacles to expanding the scope and effectiveness of insurgent raids will probably remain so considerable that they will preclude more extensive insurgent efforts to infiltrate the USSR. Border crossings are thus likely to remain infrequent and have little military impact. [REDACTED]

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SOVA M 85-10203CX

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**The Central Asian Resistance**

In parts of the USSR just north of Afghanistan, now organized as the Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, and Kirgiz republics, significant resistance to the imposition of Bolshevik control by indigenous Islamic peoples persisted for years following the October 1917 revolution. From early 1918 until 1924, and later in sporadic outbreaks well into the 1930s, Soviet forces fought guerrilla attacks by what Moscow called basmachis, another word for bandits, a term currently used in Soviet media to refer to resistance fighters in Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

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As the Russian civil war wound down, the Red Army moved into Central Asia and destroyed the most effective Central Asian leaders. Then they offered the guerrillas amnesty and spent money to lure tribal and clan groups from the resistance. In 1924, the newly created USSR reorganized the region along the ethnic and linguistic lines that exist today. Although represented as a move to respect national differences, the reorganization was designed to divide the groups to make them easier to rule. Forced collectivization in the late 1920s caused another upsurge in the fighting that continued until the late 1930s. By then the Russians had in place a group of local leaders willing to front for the Bolsheviks. [REDACTED]

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